



Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts 40 YEARS

(Document #4)

Protecting Lives, Protecting Property & Protecting the Future Since 1972

2012

NARD Annual Report

2012 Legislative Recap



Nebraska Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) worked together with the Natural Resources Committee and other state senators during the 103rd Legislative Session to protect the future of Nebraska's natural resources. Senators approved and the Governor signed 21 bills that affect NRDs. The following provides just a few of the key bills enacted this year.

LB 391e - The bill establishes the Nebraska Invasive Species Council to recommend action to minimize the effects of harmful invasive species in Nebraska. Invasive species is defined in the bill to mean aquatic or terrestrial organisms not native to the region that cause economic or biological harm and are capable of spreading to new areas. The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts is one of the members of the new council. The bill was sponsored by Senator Ken Schilz.

LB 526e - The bill allows for an entire surface water irrigation right to be transferred for a non-consumptive use. The new language would place conditions on such a transfer, including that the transfer or change in purpose will not diminish the supply of water available or otherwise adversely affect any other water appropriator, adversely affect Nebraska's ability to meet its obligations under a multistate agreement, or result in administration of the prior appropriation system by the Department of Natural Resources, which would not have otherwise occurred. The bill was sponsored by Senator Carlson.

LB 743 - The bill allows a natural resources district to assess a fee against a person requesting a variance to water use regulations to cover the administrative cost of the variance request. The bill was sponsored by Senator Schilz on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts.

LB 873e - The bill extends the sunset date for the petroleum remedial action program and fund from June 30, 2012 to June 30, 2016. The bill was sponsored by Senator Schilz.

LB 950 and LB 950Ae - The bill provides an additional \$1.4 million to the Water Resources Cash Fund, bringing the total to \$4.7 million. The emergency clause was included in the companion "A" bill. The bill was sponsored by Senator Christensen.

LB 1125e - The bill provides a process for natural resources districts to follow when implementing an occupation tax. The process for implementing an occupation tax in the bill:

(A) Acres classified by the county assessor as irrigated shall be subject to such district's occupation tax unless on or before March 1 in each subsequent year, the record owner certifies to the district the non-irrigation status of such acres.

(B) A district may exempt from the occupation tax acres that are enrolled in local, state, or federal temporary irrigation retirement programs that prohibit the application of irrigation water in the year for which the tax is levied.

(C) Except as provided in subdivisions (A) and (B) of this section, a district is prohibited from providing an exemption from, or allowing a request for a local refund of, an occupation tax on irrigated acres regardless of the irrigation source while the record owner maintains irrigated status on such acres in the year for which the tax is levied.

(D) Notwithstanding subdivisions (B) and (C) of this section, the record owner may present evidence of the non-irrigation status of the acres subject to the tax within 12 months after the date the tax was levied and the district may refund amounts collected upon such acres if an occupation tax was not levied by the district the previous year and the district had not adopted an integrated management plan as described in subsection (1) of section 2-3226.01 by March 1 in the current year. Subdivision (D) of this section terminates on October 1, 2012.

Bill LB 1125e was sponsored by Senator Christensen, included the emergency clause, and was a Speaker Priority Bill.

LB 1161e - The bill outlines that the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) may collaborate with federal agencies to do an environmental impact statement on an oil pipeline project or to evaluate a proposed route for the stated purpose of being included in a federal agency's environmental review process. If the NDEQ chooses to evaluate the route, the evaluation shall provide for at least one public hearing, and provide opportunities for public review and comment which shall include the environmental, economic, social and other impacts associated with the proposed route. The bill was sponsored by Senator Smith.

LR 40 CA - The proposed amendment to the state's Constitution would make hunting, fishing and trapping protected rights for Nebraskans subject to laws, rules and regulations. On Select File senators had adopted **AM 1611**, offered by Senator Pirsch, which clarified that the proposed right to hunt and fish shall not be construed to modify any provision of law relating to water rights. The amendment was added after concern was raised that the right to fish could be used to place a higher priority on stream flow and result in regulation of water for such. Senators gave final approval to **LR 40 CA**, sending the constitutional amendment providing the right to hunt and fish to the voters for consideration at the General Election in November 2012.

NARD Program Report

NRD Tree Program-Approximately 1.01 million tree and shrub seedlings were sold by NRDs to Nebraska landowners in 2012. For the ninth consecutive year the NARD assisted NRDs in distributing over 19,000 tree seedlings to elementary school children across Nebraska. This is just one of many ways the NARD helps foster awareness and appreciation of natural resources conservation among our state's young people.

The Upper Niobrara-White NRD (UNWNRD) and NARD hosted the NRD Forestry Workshop in June at Chadron State College. Topics and activities included tree and shrub seedling inventory management, a tour of UNWNRD facilities and equipment, planting and fabric mulch laying demonstrations, and a robust roundtable discussion. This workshop will be hosted once again in June 2013 by the Lower Elkhorn NRD.

The NARD helped plan, coordinate and host the U.S. Forest Service Client's Day and Forestry Conference in October held at Bessey Nursery and the State 4H Camp near Halsey, NE. Presenters from Kansas and South Dakota shared their expertise in the areas of drought tolerant plant species and tree pests and diseases. NRD representatives shared components of marketing their district's tree programs.

The NARD assisted eight NRDs in the promotion of conservation trees and

shrubs at farm and ranch trade shows in Grand Island, Norfolk, North Platte, Bassett, Kearney, McCook and Lincoln. In each location, the NARD worked with local NRDs by making available to show attendees specialized handouts that provide a wide variety of information about the purposes, design and establishment of conservation plantings.



NRD staff, managers and conservation partners learn about tree planting equipment at the Forestry Workshop at UNW NRD.

For the fourth consecutive year the NARD gathered from NRDs information about their tree programs for the purpose of sharing with each other services offered and charges for each service. Each year different sets of supplemental information are requested to

help gauge changing needs and opportunities. In 2012, new inquiries were centered on community forestry services and funding.

NRDs and NRCS- NRDs' goals and service boundaries are aligned across the state with NRCS, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In some cases, NRCS staff works alongside NRD staff in NRD offices. Since 2004, the NARD has maintained contribution funding agreements with the NRCS. Using federal funds, these agreements allow NRDs to fulfill a number of conservation planning, construction, maintenance and management requests by landowners. In 2012, Nebraska NRCS compensated participating NRDs approximately \$100,000 for work accomplished.

NARD Foundation

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts' Foundation was established as a way to support students with a desire to enter the field of natural resources. In 2012 over \$12,500 dollars were raised for the NARD Foundation to support youth education and programs where young people can learn more about natural resources. Funds were raised through a variety of activities including a live and silent auction at the Annual Conference. The NARD Foundation supports the following programs:

*The Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute is a weeklong conference held each July where juniors and seniors in high school gather to learn more about agriculture and natural resources in Nebraska.

*Sponsored three Nebraska college students for Ag Day on the Hill. The Nebraska representatives spent National Ag Day in Washington D.C. learning about agriculture and natural resource issues.

*Sponsored three awards and the 2nd annual Agriculture Issues Academy at the 84th Annual State FFA Convention held in Lincoln in early April. The three award areas were Outdoor-Recreation Proficiency, Natural Resources Chapter Award, and the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Career Development Event (CDE).

* The Nebraska Envirothon, an agriculture, wildlife and science competition for grades 9-12. This year's winning team, West Holt High School, represented Nebraska at the Canon Envirothon, which includes students from across the United States and Canada.

*The Nebraska Foundation for Agricultural Awareness to spread a positive agricultural message to teachers, students and parents about the importance of agriculture.

* Connecting Young Nebraskans which is a forward-looking organization that provides opportunities to shape the state's future by educating young Nebraskans on the importance of being involved in communities.

* Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) in 2012 drew 30 campers from across the state, and many of the campers received scholarships from their local NRD. The camp is open to sixth through eighth graders and focused natural resources.

These programs are a great opportunity to recognize Nebraska's youth for their interest and hard work in helping to protect our natural resources.



The 2012 Nebraska Envirothon Team from West Holt High School.

NRD Retirement Program

Thanks to the hard work of the NARD/NRD Employees Benefits Committee, the NRD Employees Retirement Program continues to grow and make improvements. The NARD 414(h) retirement fund grew 2.3% over the past fiscal year to \$19,179,345 as of June 30, 2012. The defined contribution program allows each employee to determine their investments, providing the flexibility for the employee to determine the amount of risk and potential rate of return they feel most comfortable with.

The voluntary NARD 457 programs also grew 11.6% over the past year to \$1,824,917 as of June 30, 2012. The program allows NRD employees to set aside additional pre-tax income for retirement and has the same investment options as the NARD 414(h) plan. Mark Geist and Jonathan Buekleman with UBS Financial Services provide the Nationwide investment platform for the plans. Since they have been involved, the NARD investment levels have more than tripled. Benefit Plans Inc., of Omaha provides the reporting and compliance work for the plans.



Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts

Celebrate 40 Years of Success



The year 2012 marks 40 years of protecting lives, property and the future of natural resources for Nebraska's 23 Natural Resources Districts (NRDs). Throughout 2012, the NRDs have been celebrating the success of projects and programs that help protect Nebraska's natural resources. NRDs are unique to Nebraska because they are governed by locally elected boards and Nebraska is the only state in the union to have this system. A handful of board members, managers and staff have been a part of the system since the NRD creation in 1972.

Senator Maurice Kremer introduced and the Nebraska Legislature enacted Legislative Bill (LB) 1357 in 1969 to combine Nebraska's 154 special purpose entities into 24 Natural Resources Districts by July, 1972. The original 24 NRDs' boundaries were organized based on Nebraska's major river basins which allows for better management practices to be applied to similar topography. In 1989, the Middle Missouri River NRD and the Papio NRD were merged into one, becoming the Papio-Missouri River NRD which resulted in the current NRD system.

"For the last 40 years, the 23 NRDs across the state have been addressing natural resources issues and concerns with local solutions," said Ron Bishop, who has been the manager at Central Platte NRD since 1972.

Natural Resources Districts were created to solve flood control, soil erosion, irrigation run-off, and groundwater quantity and quality issues. Nebraska's NRDs are involved in a wide variety of projects and programs to conserve and protect the state's natural resources. NRDs are charged under state law with 12 areas of responsibility including flood control, soil erosion, groundwater management and many others.

Nebraska NRDs Protecting Lives, Protecting the Environment



The **Upper Niobrara White NRD** is divided into six ground water management sub-areas with 1,853 irrigation flow meters. A four year allocation of 54 acre-inches of ground water is in place through 2014 for the areas where ground water decline is a concern.



The **Middle Niobrara NRD** is the early stages of developing the Long Pine Creek Watershed Plan, located primarily north of Ainsworth, NE. The Plan is to help address the creek's impairments to the water quality and erosion of land.



The **North Platte NRD** constructed the Gering Valley Flood Control project to protect lives and property from flood waters by slowing the rain water going down from the surrounding bluffs. The early work was done on the project by the Army

Corps of Engineers, and the final two pieces was completed in a joint effort between the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the North Platte NRD.

In 2010 the **Upper Loup NRD** started a District wide recycling program. Recycling was a need that had not been met previously in the District. It has been very successful since its implementation and continues to expand.

Combining management options through its Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations and Integrated Management Planning, the **South Platte NRD** strives to protect current and future ground water use through allocations, retirement of irrigated acres and recharge projects.



The **Upper Republican NRD** has retired 3,260 irrigated acres and pipe water that otherwise would have been consumed by crops to increase Republican River stream flows. The acreage retirement/stream flow enhancement project is designed to help keep the state in compliance with the Republican River Compact and is being funded by a local tax in the URNRD.

When the **Middle Republican NRD** was first established they took the lead roll on construction of several flood control structures within the District. These structures continue to be maintained and inspected by the Middle Republican NRD. The effectiveness of these structures was demonstrated during recent heavy spring rains.

The **Twin Platte NRD** has partnered with Pheasants Forever on the Corners for Wildlife program since 1997. During that time, over 100 pivot corner projects have been enrolled in this program. This program has also stabilized highly erodible land, improving air and water quality in the District for future generations.



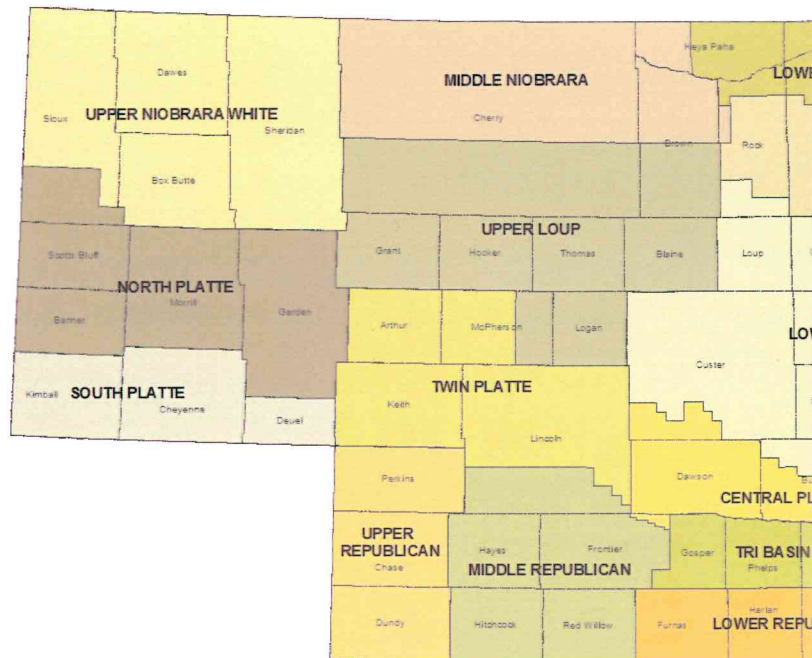
The **Lower Republican NRD** Rural water program serves 88 rural residence hook-ups, 62 rural livestock hook-up and the Village of Guide Rock with 117 miles of pipe-line and a 100 ft. high water tower with a 100,000 gallon tank.



Tri-Basin NRD has established an extensive dedicated observation well network to monitor groundwater levels throughout the district. The network, which was developed from 2003 to 2006, has 108 observation wells. Pressure sensors and data loggers in these wells enable Tri-Basin staff to measure groundwater levels twice a day.

The **Lower Loup NRD's** largest in the state and cover made up of all or parts of 16 and NRD crews could choose trees and shrubs in 2012. The trees planted across the LLN

The **Little Blue NRD** operates recreation areas that are open to the many recreation opportunities including flood control and water. The newest of these is Lone Star Recreation Area, NE



Land agents use rich stores of groundwater beneath Nebraska as a selling point to attract homesteaders.

Much of Nebraska and the Great Plains are devastated by the twin catastrophes of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl.

Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts are formed across Nebraska, county by county.

1870

1920

1930

1940

1950


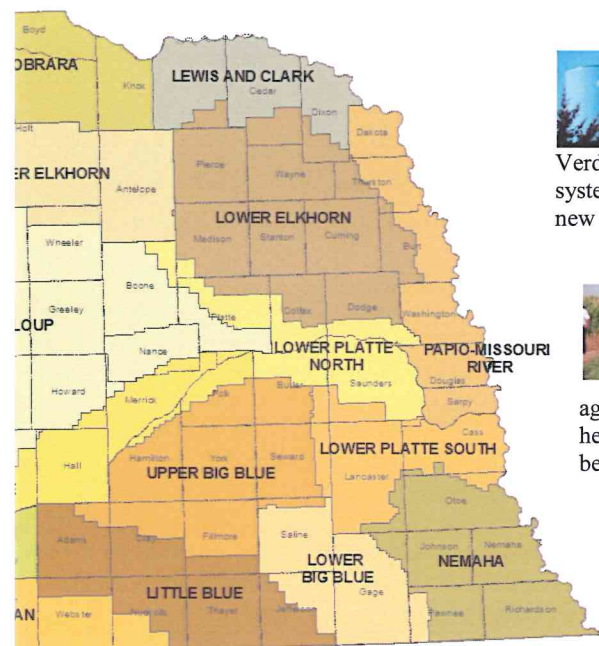
1960

In 1872, Nebraskan J. Sterling Morton creates Arbor Day, the first holiday devoted to natural resources conservation.


In 1935 the U.S. Soil Conservation Service is established to assist farmers and help foster a new conservation ethic across the United States.


Devastating floods during the 1950's massive property damage and spurred flood control projects across Nebraska.


Protecting Property, Protecting the Future!



The **Lower Niobrara NRD** began construction in 1984 on the West Know Rural Water System which began operation on January 1, 1985 with two communities, Verdigre and Winnetoon and 160 rural customers. The system continues to grow with the development of a new well field and the addition of 3 communities.

 **The Upper Elkhorn NRD** has cooperated with the University of Nebraska Research Center out of Concord to demonstrate the importance of irrigation and nutrient management on local landowner field plots. Tours were held for the general public to ask questions and become better informed on these issues.

 **The Lewis and Clark NRD** created the Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project in 1981. The project uses surface water from Lewis and Clark Lake as a source of drinking water for over 800 rural homes and 4 communities.


The Maskenthine Lake Recreation Area, near Stanton, NE, was constructed by the **Lower Elkhorn NRD** in 1975 for flood control and recreation. It was the first major flood control project in Northeast Nebraska's Elkhorn River Basin and also the first to receive a grant from the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission Water Development Fund.

The **Papio Missouri River** NRD has sponsored and cost shared effective flood control efforts throughout the most flood-prone areas of their district. To protect lives and property NRDs have constructed or maintain more than 700 flood control structures across Nebraska. The NRDs design and build dams and levees, to protect lives and property from flood waters.

anting program is one of the
entire District. The NRD is
braska counties. Landowners
om more than 40 species of
were 72,260 conservation
this year.

In 2004 the **Upper Big Blue NRD** and the Cornerstone Bank entered into a collaborative partnership sharing a small section of irrigated land that the bank manages to be designated as an agricultural demonstration and education project .


In 2012 **Lower Platte North NRD** officially opened Lake Wanahoo. The 1,777-acre recreation area features picnic shelters, a four-mile walking and biking trail, camping sites and fishing which providing much needed flood control for the area.




The **Central Plate NRD** has reached agreements with canal companies in Dawson County to undertake conjunctive use of those canals. These agreements protect the local ag economy, and provide excess flows for groundwater recharge and endangered species required by the Platte River Recovery Implementation Plan.

The **Lower Platte South NRD**, partnering with the City of Lincoln and the University of Nebraska, completed the Antelope Valley Project in 2012. Besides creating a beautiful open waterway through the heart of Lincoln, the project removed several hundred acres and 800 homes and businesses from the floodplain. The project also brought many transportation and community revitalization benefits.

maintains seven recreational areas. These areas offer a variety of benefits along with other benefits such as water quality protection. The Recreation Area near

 The **Lower Big Blue NRD** protects lives and property with 273 dams in 11 watersheds. In conjunction with the NDEQ, the LBBNRD has renovated existing watersheds to provide water quality enhancement and protection.



Flood and erosion control has been the dominant theme in the **Nemaha NRD** over the past 40 years with more than 400 projects in place. One example in the Muddy Creek Watershed improves a county road while providing valuable wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities too.

s of groundwater to irrigate crops expands automatically with the development of the center pivot and other technologies.

NRDs create groundwater management plans to protect the quantity and quality of Nebraska's groundwater.

Water, and effective policies to manage and protect it, is a major focus for NRDs.

1970



1980

1990

2000

2012

In 1972, Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts form and begin taking action to address a wide variety of natural resources challenges.

Because of its value to farmers and urban centers, groundwater is commonly recognized as the state's most precious natural resources.

NRDs continue to play a leading role in addressing local natural resources concerns.

Notes from Joe Anderjaska, NARD Board President

In celebrating this 40th anniversary of Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts, it is important to remember the success of the past, learn from our mistakes and look forward to the challenges of the future. In 1972, progressive thinking state leaders combined 154 special purpose groups into the NRDs using the state's major river basins as boundaries.

In 40 years, NRDs have constructed and maintain over 700 flood control structures that offer many additional benefits such as water quality improvement, recreation and groundwater recharge. Nebraska is fortunate to have an abundant supply of groundwater. In 1972 there were 2,400 registered irrigation wells in Nebraska, today we have 124,000. This rapid growth created challenges that required difficult decisions to be made, legislation pursued, and rules and regulations established. While actions may not have always been popular, the goal of a sustainable water supply for future generations has been, and will continue to be the NRDs driving force. As water management moves forward, NRDs' must continue to work together, learn from the past and strive to look forward to the future with new ideas, technology and tools.



Historically, Nebraska was known as the "Great American Desert" due in part to the lack of trees. Since 1972, over 60 million trees have been planted throughout the state with the NRDs tree programs. The trees have provided beneficial windbreaks for livestock, reduced wind erosion, stabilized soil and increased wildlife habitat. In a state known for Arbor Day, the NRDs have been the leaders in getting trees into the ground.

Flood control, groundwater and trees only represent a portion of the 12 main charges for the NRDs. Even though the NRDs remain independent, local entities with locally elected directors, some accomplishments are only achieved when a unified approach is undertaken. As an association we are able to influence policy, advance legislation, offer health care insurance, retirement programs and educate the general public. NARD board members have collectively worked to meet the needs of the districts and will continue to do so in the future.

I want to personally thank and acknowledge the handful of great people that have helped lead our organization through these first 40 years. New faces continue to appear and will help pursue our commitment to protecting lives, protecting property and protecting the future.

40 Years of Service!

Congratulations to the natural resources districts board members and staff on 40 years of service! Your hard work and dedication is appreciated!

Central Platte NRD— Board Member: Dick Mercer; Staff— Ron Bishop, Dianne Miller, Milt Moravek

Lower Loup NRD— Board Members: Dean Rasmussen, James Nelson; Staff— Rita Goldfish, Ona Foland

Lower Platte North NRD— Board Member: Don Kavan

Lower Platte South NRD— Staff: Glenn Johnson

Upper Elkhorn NRD— Staff: Joy Knapp

Upper Niobrara White NRD— Board Member: James (Jim) Irwin

NRD Board members with 35-39 years of service: Bill Meyer, LENRD, Darwin Anderson, LLNRD; Ron Sabatka, LPNNRD; Jim Moore, LRNRD; Larry Moore, LBBNRD. **NRD board members with 30-34 years of service:** Mark Fehringer, CPNRD; Joe Hergott, LBNRD; Ken Regier and Merlin Volkmer, UBBNRD.

NRD staff with 35-39 years of service: Tom Moser, LCNRD; Mike Onnen, LBNRD; Ken Berney, LENRD; Daniel Ray and Beverley Smedra, LLNRD; Vivian Frasch, LNNRD; Ron Cacek, NPNRD; Emmett Egr, Dick Sklenar and Marlin Petermann, PMRNRD; Kent Miller, TPNRD, Rod DeBuhr, John Turnbull and Ken Feather, UBBNRD; Glenda Cushing, UNWNRD. **NRD staff members with 30-34 years of service:** Sandy Noecker, CPRND; Marilyn Schumacher, LCNRD; Dave Clabaugh, LBBNRD; Vickie DeJong, Phyllis Knobbe and Stan Stabb, LENRD; Cheryl Hornickel, Leon (Butch) Koehlmoos and Robert Mohler, LLNRD; Paul Zillig, Kathy Spence and Dan Schulz, LPSNRD; Dan Smith and Betty Fritsch, MRNRD; Bob Hilske, Vernon (Junior) Speers, Mark McDonald and Jane Kuhl, Nemaha NRD; Martin Cleveland, Bill Warren and Darlene Hensley, PMRNRD; Jay Bitner, Jeff Ball and Nancy Brisk, UBBNRD; Wilma Zimbleman and Mike Nesbitt, URNRD.

Information and Education

Public Relations- The NARD has assisted NRDs with public relations, communication, education, developing partnership, and training needs as the districts pursue their natural resources management responsibilities. The NARD has developed and outlined priorities and a short-term and long-term plan for public relations efforts for Information and Education (I&E) staff and NRD managers and directors. The main focus for 2012 was educating the public about the NRDs 40 years of success through a variety of avenues.

The NARD continues to promote NRDs and NRD projects through statewide press releases, print materials, website, and presentations and direct communication with partners. Newsletters, statewide factsheets, legislative reports, and social media have been developed to promote Nebraska NRDs. NARD uses "Protecting Lives, Protecting Property, Protecting the Future" for promotion and to tell the NRD story and encourage its use by all NRDs.

Public relations and communications training sessions have been provided to I&E staff, NRD managers and board members. Trainings session included: Grassroots public relations; exploring new technologies; sharing public relations strategies and education activities; and conflict management. The NARD continues to hold message development group discussion sessions and trainings throughout the year with individual NRDs' board members, managers and employees to continue upholding the image of the NRDs.

Education Programs- The NARD sponsors, promotes, hosts or assists with a variety of projects and programs to educate both youth and adults about conservation and natural resources. Throughout the year NARD promotes and educates teachers and citizens on education opportunities offered by NRDs. Over the past year the NARD helped coordinate and promoted the state and regional Land Judging and Range Judging Contest and provides educational information about contests on their website.

In 2012 over 500 students from 9th-12th grades participated in the Nebraska Envirothon regional competitions. The 2012 Nebraska Envirothon State Championship team was from West Holt High School. The state competition was held May 5th at Nebraska State 4-H Center near Halsey. Students from across the state participated in five-member teams, and competed against 13 other Nebraska high school teams. West Holt high school represented Nebraska at the Canon Envirothon Contest in Selinsgrove, PA the last week of July.

Campers from across the state participated in the third annual Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) at the State 4-H Youth Camp near Halsey June 17-20. The camp was sponsored and organized by Nebraska NRDs and the NARD. The four-day adventure drew 30 campers from across the state. The camp focused on water resources, soil and land, forestry, range, grassland and wildlife.

Liaison Activities

The NRD/NDEQ Liaison position was created to assist in matters dealing with NDEQ and other state and federal agencies such as the University of Nebraska, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Department of Natural Resources and the Environmental Protection Agency. One of the roles is to ensure consistency among the NRDs and assist with regulatory compliance matters. Regulation review and updates are periodically undertaken by the NDEQ in response to changing state or national environmental laws. When NRD programs are impacted it is necessary that all the NRDs are provided the information to determine the extent of the impact. This was the case in 2012 when a proposal to regulate regional haze by EPA created potential challenges in water management for the NRDs. The NARD, NRDs and NDEQ met with representative of EPA Region 7 to provide information on water management and the impacts the rule may have on the NRD programs. The rule will not be implemented in the near future however it will be necessary for the NRDs/NARD to continue to remain attentive for cross program impacts.

Other activities have included coordinating training events, grant writing and review assistance, the development of monitoring plans, standard operating procedures and representing the NARD on several working groups.

NARD Executive Board

The NARD executive committee consists of the NARD board officers and the chairs of the Information and Education and Legislature committees. The NARD board consists of representation from each of the local 23 NRDs. The board members meet five times throughout the year and help guide the association.

Joe Anderjaska from the Middle Republican NRD is the current NARD President. Anderjaska has served on the Middle Republican NRD board for twelve years, on the NARD board for ten years and previously held the Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer positions. Anderjaska was appointed by Governor Heineman to serve on the Republican River Basin Water Sustainability Task Force.

Terry Martin from the Upper Republican NRD is the current NARD Vice President. Martin has served 12 years on the URNRD Board and currently is board chair, and has served five years as an NARD Board representative. Martin previously served as the NARD Board Secretary/Treasurer.

NARD executive committee members, along with the president and vice president, include Jim Bendfeldt from the Central Platte NRD, NARD secretary/treasurer; Jim Meisner from Twin Platte NRD, chair of the legislative committee; Jim Johnson from South Platte NRD, chair of the information and education committee, and Mary Ann Wortmann past NARD President.

Events Hosted by The NARD

- Annual Conference
- NARD Board Meetings
- NRD Manager Meetings
- Legislative Conference
- I&E Meetings
- Washington D.C. Conference
- Public Relations Trainings
- Technician Trainings



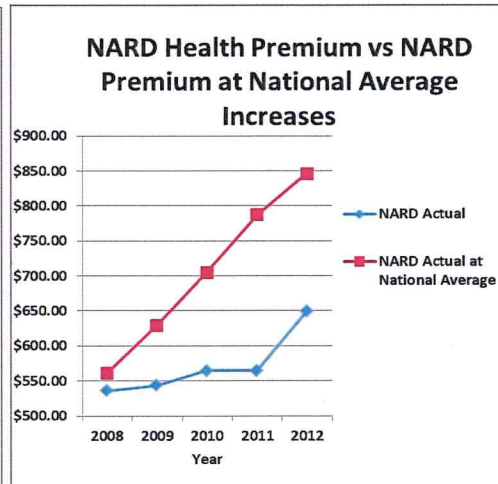
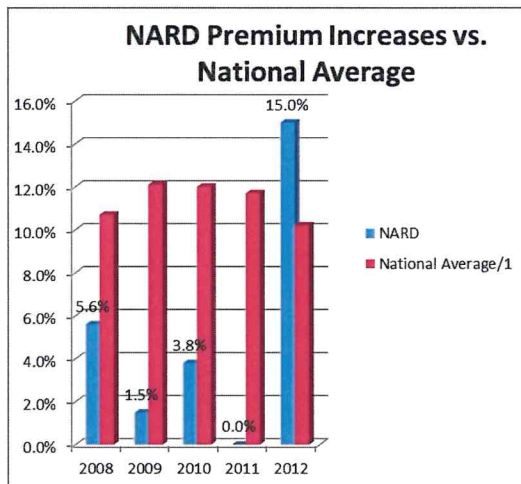
Members enjoy a tour during the annual Washington DC Conference.

NARD Health Insurance Program

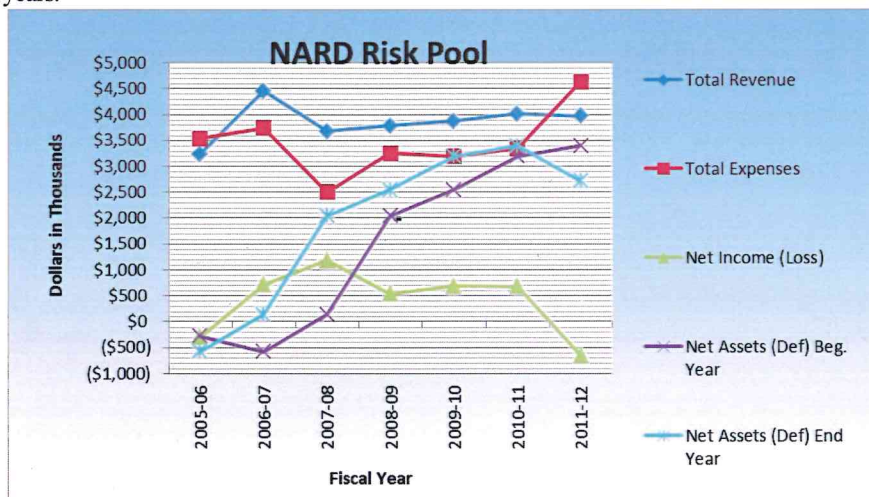
The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts has operated a licensed health risk pool for NRD employees since FY 2006-07. The program is governed by the NARD Risk Pool Board of Directors, which are same as the NARD board members. Over the last five years of the program, the annual health insurance premiums increases have been below 5% while the national annual averages have been between 10.7 and 12.1%. However, in 2012 we had a "drought year" with almost 5 times the number of people with high claims which resulted in over \$600,000 in losses for the fiscal year.

In 2012 the aggregate claims are at 92% of maximum. In previous years, the program has been around 80%. In Fiscal Year 2011-12, there were 19 individuals over \$50,000 in claims with one over \$400,000 and another over \$300,000. In previous years the program has had 1 to 7 over \$50,000. In 2010-11, we did not have one claim over \$100,000. The high number of people over \$50,000 in claims for FY 2011-12 has led to the losses this year.

If the NARD Risk Pool Board would have selected an insurance rate to recover all the losses and make sure that the program would add to reserves on FY 2012-13, the rates would have had to increase over 30%. However, the board chose to rely on reserves that had built up over the good years to cover some of the losses. Thus, the rates increased above the national average for the first time in 5 years at 15%. On a positive note, there were no increases in dental insurance for the next fiscal year. NRD employee's involvement in wellness activities and programs reduces health care cost to local NRDs and taxpayers.



The chart above and to the right shows the NARD insurance premium increase compared with the national premium average for the past four years. The chart to the left shows the actual NARD insurance premium cost compared to what the NARD insurance premium would be with the national average increases. The chart bellows explains NARD Risk Pool income, expenses and assets over the past seven fiscal years.



Even though it was a bad year financially in fiscal year 2011-12, the program worked as it was set up to do – work off reserves built up in the "good years" to cover losses in the "bad year". Mid- American Benefits provided the third-party claims processing. Milt Willnerd, Willnerd and Associates, works with NARD to make sure all state and federal reports are filed correctly and in a timely fashion.

Notes from Dean Edson, NARD Executive Director

The NARD staff is honored to be working for the districts, directors and staff and works hard with programs that provide assistance to the districts with legislation, tree programs, water management, youth programs, benefit programs and public relations. The NARD Staff is specially honored to be working for the NARD while the districts are celebrating the 40 year anniversary of the NRDs.

There are several reports provided in this documents of the programs carried out by the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) on behalf of Nebraska's 23 Natural Resources Districts.

The NARD manages the Health Insurance Risk Pool and Retirement Programs for the benefit of NRD staff. The NARD Board and committees have worked hard over the years to make this program a success. While Fiscal Year 2011-12 ended in losses, the previous year's addition to reserves allowed the program to withstand the loss. The NARD also manages the retirement programs which continue to grown even in a sluggish economy.

The NARD also manages the NARD Foundation which has grown significantly over the past 10 years. What started out as a small foundation with \$4,100 in assets and providing funding to only one program has grown to over \$283,000 in assets, funding seven programs. The fundraisers at the annual meeting and member involvement help grow the program each year.

The association strives to balance our general operating budget while maintaining quality programs for the districts and local employees. For the 17th year in a row, the NARD has balanced our budget and added to the reserves. However, not one of these accomplishments would have happened if it was not for member involvement from the district board members and staff. To all of you, thank you very much! As we move forward, the challenges undoubted will change and be different. For example, who would have predicted that we would go from record floods in 2011 to record drought in 2012? The NARD staff is excited to assist the local NRDs in their efforts to continue to protect lives, protect property and protect the future!

Contact NARD!

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